

B

1. On so-called **Bad** people

G. Mother, what can you tell us on the people who have no love in their heart and are bad?

G.G. To begin with, I don't accept that there are people who are "bad". There are people who are ignorant, who do not know. This is why, to give us an example, Christ said from the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do". One day, I was talking with someone who hates Jews. I asked him, "Why"? He said, "Because they are Antichrists". And I told him, "You, a Christian, are filled with so much hatred? Have you become the advocate of our Lord, who said, Forgive them, they don't know what they do? How can you take justice into your own hands? Well? We can hate the act itself, but not those who did it"! Because, the moment you put hatred for someone into your heart, your harmony with God is lost. He can no longer dwell in you.

K. What do you believe then? Are people good?

G.G. Oh! Very, very good!

K. Good?

G. G. Not just good ... Angels! The heart never stops being good. You can see even a wrongdoer having tears in his eyes at a given moment and saying, "Well now, I still cannot understand how I did that" ... This spark of god is inside us. It cannot be absent from any human being.

K. Yes ... That is, you believe that the good element in Man is this Spark of God, and that we all have it ...

G.G. Ah, ... but there is nothing else! Take out the Spark of God, and we become living "corpses". That breath, which God blew into us, is Love. Is it gone? Then we are like living dead walking about ... Just think of it!

2. on the Monastery in **Bethany**¹

G.G. And so, with God's help, I arrived at the Monastery in Bethany. But ... I didn't know that I had to bring presents. How was I to imagine that? Going there, I kept saying to myself, "Who knows where I am going now". After greeting me, the Hegumen (Abbot), Father Theodosios, said to me, "Now let's see what you have brought us. Perhaps some fine piece of silk to make vestments with"? Alas! My little suitcase contained no such things. I said, "Father Theodosios, I don't know if Nella wrote you that I am moneyless". ... He said nothing. I took out a Crucifix that a Catholic friend had given me the day of my departure – a large wooden cross with a bronze figure of Christ on it. I told him, "Father, I have brought you this Crucifix". He took it and placed it on the table. ... I remember that from the first days, Gerondas Theodosios gave me a book, telling me that in our times, for want of Spiritual Guides, we are led by books. The book was the Ladder of Divine Ascent by St. John Climacus. For the first year I was allowed only the Ladder and the Gospels to read, nothing else.

¹ G. Meneopoulou, Athens, 1970-80

After a short while, he asked me, “What can you do”? “Anything you would like me to”. Well, my first job was to sweep the courtyards. But as soon as I had finished sweeping a nun would come with a broom in her hands. “You did nothing”, she would tell me and start sweeping all over again. These things are done for the testing of the novice, but I did not know it then, so I took it for a joke. And do you know why I laughed? Because I had a dislike for sweeping, a strong dislike. At the Anandawan Leper colony, every time Mrs. Amte swept, I placed a handkerchief over my mouth and went away. And she said, laughing, “Take care. According to our religion, if you do not overcome it now, in your next life you will be a sweeper carrying a broom all the time”. In my first letter to her I wrote, “I have already started overcoming it, as you told me.” That was only the beginning. Brought up as I was, with tuition in foreign languages etc, with lessons in music – sitting at the piano and exercising for five hours, thinking that that was an achievement ... and all this, alas, just to be praised by some people! Now I had to go to Church at 4 o’clock in the morning for Matins, and it was so cold Very cold ... bitterly cold! I could see one gerondissa on the floor, near the pew, holding a komboskini with 300 knots; another on over there, snoozing; still another, farther away shivering with the cold, glancing right and left; yet another, getting up and with the blessing of Hegumene (Abbess) going out to feed the hen, then returning to her place ... Sitting quietly, I started to wonder what I was doing there. In front of me, as I sat in the pro-narthex, was a large icon of the Archangel Gabriel. Not, the moment I asked myself, “what am I doing here with all these”? I felt as if something hit my head, as if the Archangels said to me, “My child, as I am an Angel and speak only gently, I want to tell you that when you were 17 or 18 years old, studying music or foreign languages by the hours, going to the theatre, visiting museums, or watching ballet performances, all these women from that same age sang the “Kyrie Eleison”... the “We praise, bless and worship the Lord” ... Shame on you! Shame on you for not understanding”! At that instant, my dear brothers and sisters, I saw them all as they were Angels! I said to myself, “Shame! Shame on me! Who am I”? From that day on, I made obedience to all of them. Not only to one, but to all! To such an extent that, years later, when I went back, they reminded me of it ... I stayed there three years. During the second year, the inner voice said again, “Here, too, you are only temporarily”. You know, I took it to heart then, for I had had enough of travelling. Little did I know what was in store for me – Africa, the U.S.A., Patmos, and so much more. ...

3. on the trace left by a passing **Boat**

G.G. One day I was saying to a friend, a lady missionary, who had set up an entire hospital in Africa and was now going back to the U.S.A. contented, “when I depart from this world, just as a passing boat leaves no trace on the surface of the water – as the poet says – so shall I leave no trace”. ... But I have no qualms of conscience. That’s it! Apathy/Detachment! If the Lord wanted, He could have made me different. But He leads the Way and I follow Him and behold His Miracles! I am only a spectator. ...²

4. on the **Books** she recommended

First, the Holy Gospel. Every day one chapter in the morning and one in the evening.

The Prophets, The Psalter

² G. Meneopoulou, Athens, 1970-80

The Epistle of St. James the Lord's Brother. Every day

The Way of the Pilgrim

The Cloud of Unknowing

The Ladder of divine Ascent by St. John Climacus

St. Isaac the Syrian

St. Maximos the Confessor

St. Nilus.

St. Symeon th New Theologian

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a' Kempis